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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to discover the career interests that second-, fourth-, and sixth-grade students have. The sample included 20 second-, 25 fourth-, and 20 sixth-grade students in 3 schools in Mississippi. The students were administered a questionnaire asking them to rate 12 career areas: artistic, scientific, nature, authority, mechanical, industrial, business detail, persuasive, accommodating, humanitarian, social, and physical performing. The questionnaire was adapted to the age levels of the students. The results showed that the careers that second- and fourth-grade students liked most seemed to focus predominately on subjects that are taught at the elementary level, while the careers least liked by second and fourth graders were occupations that are not part of subjects taught in these grades. The careers least liked by these students are the non-glamorous occupations. Findings for sixth grade students were similar. Based on the results of this study, it was recommended that career awareness be incorporated into the elementary curriculum and that career exploratory activities be initiated through the use of teacher-made or commercially prepared materials. (KC)

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CAREER INTEREST AREAS IDENTIFIED BY ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

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With elementary school guidance becoming more important in the schools, it is necessary that an attempt be made to understand the vocational/career aspirations of elementary school children (Barbe and Chambers, 1963). Career education provides youngsters an opportunity to see the relationships between what they are asked to learn in school and their future careers. Emphasis is placed on problem solving and decision making skills, acquiring information about possible careers, developing personal and job skills, and developing adequate self-concepts (Torrance, 1978).

Several states have enacted laws in an effort to facilitate the teaching of career education in public elementary and secondary schools. For example, the Mississippi Legislature passed Senate Bill Number 2629 (An Act to Authorize Program in the Public Schools of Mississippi) authorizing the Mississippi State Department of Education, through the Office of Career Education to assume the responsibility for promoting a statewide effort designed to prepare local school facilities and staffs to incorporate career education into their local educational program.

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Purpose

The general purpose of this research study was to discover the various career interests that second-, fourth-, and sixth-grade students possess. Specifically, this study included second (N=20), fourth (N=25), and sixth graders (N=20) in three schools in Mississippi. One classroom from each grade-level was randomly selected by each principal at the primary (second), elementary (fourth), and middle (sixth) schools. Although the sample size is small, the results may have some interesting implications.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix) included the twelve "career areas" that were taken from Winefordner (1978). Each of the career areas were divided into categories. A brief description of each area and accompanying categories was as follows:

I. Artistic (interest in producing feelings or beliefs: 1-6 on the questionnaire).

II. Scientific (interest in investigating and gathering information about the natural world in relation to medical, life, or physical: 7-10 on the questionnaire).

III. Nature (interest in taking care of plants and animals: 11-14 on the questionnaire).

IV. Authority (interest in the safety of people and property: 15-17 on the questionnaire).

V. Mechanical (interest in working with machinery and methods of using theories in life situations: 18-21 on the questionnaire).

VI. Industrial (interest in situations within a factory: 22-24 on the questionnaire).

VII. Business Detail (interest in situations requiring accuracy and detail, usually in offices: 25-28 on the questionnaire).

VIII. Persuasive (interest in selling and other techniques: 29-31 on the questionnaire).

IX. Accommodating (interest in taking care of others through catering or service: 32-35 on the questionnaire).

X. Humanitarian (interest in helping others: 36-38 on the questionnaire).

XI. Social - Business (interest in leadership through verbal or numerical skills: 39-44 on the questionnaire).

XII. Physical Performing (interest in physical situations conducted in front of people: 45-48 on the questionnaire).

Method

Oral directions were given to the participants and questions were fielded by the examiner. Approximately, twenty minutes were allowed for fourth and sixth graders. The readability level of the questionnaire was modified for the second graders with changes in several phrases. In addition, the Likert scale was adjusted from numbers to words in an effort to assist the second graders in responding to the questionnaire.

Analysis of Data

The following represents a summary in the form of percentages of the total students responding. The results of the best liked and least liked categories at all three grade levels are as follows:

Like Very Much -

2nd -	Drawing and painting	80%
	Librarian	80%
	Record keeping	75%
	Financial record keeping	75%
	Singing and dancing	65%
4th -	Drawing and painting	56%
	Professional player	56%
	Acting in a play	52%
	Animal training and care	52%
	Acrobatics	48%
6th -	Playing an instrument	60%
	Athletics or sports	60%
	Selling products	55%
	Drawing and painting	50%
	Perform tests in a lab	50%

Don't Like

2nd -	Building houses	70%
	Building roads and highways	60%
	Doctors, dentists, and nurses	55%
	Fireman	50%
	Buy products	50%
	Beautician or barber	50%
4th -	Usher	80%
	Fireman	76%
	Operating outdoor equipment or machines	76%
	Building roads and highways	72%
6th -	Building roads and highways	75%
	Policeman	70%
	Usher	70%
	Attendant	70%
	Public Relations	70%

Discussion of Data

The careers that second- and fourth-grade students liked most seem to predominately focus on subjects that are taught at the elementary level. On the other hand, the careers least liked by second and fourth graders were pertaining to occupations that are not generally a component of subjects taught in these grades. It is interesting to note that the careers least liked by second- and fourth-grade students are the non-glamorous occupations.

With the exception of selling products and performing tests in a lab, sixth-grade students seem to like careers that are related to various school activities. In regard to the least liked careers, sixth-grade students seem to focus on occupations that are of the non-glamorous variety and are not generally emphasized in the various subjects taught in this grade.

Based on the results of this study, there is probably a need to begin exposing elementary students to as many careers as possible by relating the careers to the various subjects taught in the elementary grades. Specifically, career awareness activities need to be incorporated into the elementary curriculum. In addition, there is probably a need to institute career exploratory activities through the use of teacher-made and/or commercially prepared materials.

Appendix

Grade _____ Male _____ Female _____

The following list of interests refer to jobs you might enjoy doing when you are older. Circle the corresponding number for each response (3 for "like very much," 2 for "like," and 1 for "don't like").

			like very much	like	don't like
I.	1.	Writing a book	3	2	1
	2.	Taking pictures	3	2	1
	3.	Drawing and painting	3	2	1
	4.	Acting in a play	3	2	1
	5.	Playing an instrument	3	2	1
	6.	Singing and dancing	3	2	1
II.	7.	Mathematics (physics and chemistry)	3	2	1
	8.	Study of plants and animals	3	2	1
	9.	Doctors, dentists, and nurses	3	2	1
	10.	Perform tests in a lab	3	2	1
III.	11.	Farming	3	2	1
	12.	Fishing	3	2	1
	13.	Animal training and care	3	2	1
	14.	Forests and parks	3	2	1
IV.	15.	Policeman	3	2	1
	16.	Fireman	3	2	1
	17.	Guard	3	2	1
V.	18.	Building houses	3	2	1
	19.	Building roads and highways	3	2	1
	20.	Making sure materials and equipment are safe	3	2	1
	21.	Operating outdoor equipment or machines	3	2	1

			like very much	like	don't like
VI.	22.	Using hand tools	3	2	1
	23.	Operate machine	3	2	1
	24.	Count or weigh products	3	2	1
VII.	25.	Arithmetic skills	3	2	1
	26.	Record keeping	3	2	1
	27.	Operate computer terminals and typewriters	3	2	1
	28.	Financial record keeping	3	2	1
VIII.	29.	Salesman	3	2	1
	30.	Work in store, sales office, or customer's home selling products	3	2	1
	31.	Buy products	3	2	1
IX.	32.	Beautician or barber	3	2	1
	33.	Taking tickets at movies or other places	3	2	1
	34.	Usher	3	2	1
	35.	Attendants	3	2	1
X.	36.	Preacher or church worker	3	2	1
	37.	Nurse (rehabilitation)	3	2	1
	38.	Aide, orderly, and technician	3	2	1
XI.	39.	Administrator	3	2	1
	40.	Supervisor or manager	3	2	1
	41.	Librarian	3	2	1
	42.	Public relations	3	2	1
	43.	Lawyer	3	2	1
	44.	Researcher	3	2	1
XII.	45.	Athletics or sports	3	2	1
	46.	Professional player	3	2	1
	47.	Official or referee	3	2	1
	48.	Acrobatics	3	2	1

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